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Wild and cultivated plants poisonous to humans in Canada

A preliminary inventory

Canada

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Wild and cultivated plants poisonous to humans in Canada

A preliminary inventory

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SUMMARY

This is the second of two publications providing a preliminary inventory of native, naturalized, and cultivated vascular plants causing poisoning or mechanical injury to livestock, other animals, and people in Canada. The first publication, Vascular plants poisonous to livestock in Canada, 1. A preliminary inventory, was published in 1983. This second publication covers vascular plants poisonous or causing mechanical injury to humans.

The two publications are being distributed to various experts for their suggestions on supplementary additions and corrections. Information obtained from readers will be utilized in a subsequent treatment, which is to include illustrations and other identification aids. Those who have supplementary information or corrections are asked to communicate with the authors at the Biosystematics Research Institute, Research Branch, Agriculture Canada, Ottawa, Ontario K1A 0C6. A limited number of copies of the first publication are still avalaible at this address.

RÉSUMÉ

Ce bulletin est le deuxième volet d'un inventaire provisoire des plantes vasculaires indigènes, naturalisées ou cultivées qui, au Canada, causent des intoxications ou des blessures aux troupeaux d'élevage, à d'autres animaux et à l'homme. La première publication de la série, Vascular plants poisonous to livestock in Canada, 1. A preliminary inventory, a paru en 1983. La deuxième traite des plantes vasculaires qui causent des intoxications ou des blessures à l'homme.

Les deux bulletins sont distribués à divers experts afin que ceux-ci y apportent des corrections on de nouvelles données complémentaires. Les renseignements que les lecteurs nous feront parvenir seront utilisés dans une publication subséquente qui comprendra des illustrations et d'autres outils d'identification. Ceux qui ont des données complementaires ou des corrections à apporter à la présente publication sont priés de s'adresser aux auteurs, à l'Institut de recherches biosystématiques, Direction générale de la recherche, Agriculture Canada, Ottawa (Ontario) K1A 0C6. Il reste encore quelques exemplaires du premier bulletin qu'on peut obtenir à l'adresse précitée.

INTRODUCTION

SCOPE

There is much confusion as to which plants can cause poisoning to humans in Canada. Some general publications dealing with poisonous plants perpetuate erroneous information, do not cite source data, or do not differentiate between plants causing serious poisoning problems and those responsible for minor or dubious poisonings. The most comprehensive and accurate sources of information on plant poisoning in North America are Muenscher (1951), Kingsbury (1964), Hardin and Arena (1969), and Kinghorn (1977). Additional information on poisonous plants in Canada is included in Fyles (1920) and McIntosh (1980). Plants causing hay fever are listed in Bassett et al. (1978).

Plant-induced poisoning occurs when one or more chemicals present in a plant produce an undesirable physiological response in an individual. The occurrence of poisoning by a particular plant species often varies. Some species of plants are toxic only at certain stages of their life cycle whereas others are most toxic during only one part of the growing season. In some cases the entire plant is toxic but in others only the leaves, seeds, or seedlings contain toxic ingredients. Some plants cause poisoning only when toxic elements, such as selenium, occur in the soil. Other plants may lose their toxins upon drying. Some toxins are so potent that a single mouthful of some plants can rapidly cause death. Other toxins are cumulative, the effects only becoming evident when the material is consumed over a long period.

The metabolism of individuals and their ages also determine the degree of plant toxicity. Some people are highly allergic to a given plant whereas others are immune or only mildly susceptible. Children generally are poisoned by a smaller amount of toxic principle than adults.

Several broad classes of chemicals are responsible for the toxic reactions caused by plants. Organic toxins include alkaloids, glucosides, oxalic acid, and resinoids. In addition, inorganic toxins such as molybdenum, nitrates, and selenium, taken up from the soil by some plants, can accumulate in plant tissue to toxic levels. Some plants contain substances that can cause photosensitization in humans. Plant poisons can cause short-term illness, violent sickness, or death. Some plants are suspected of containing carcinogens.

Many poisonings are caused by house plants, cultivated garden plants, and ornamentals. However, some are attributable to native or naturalized plants. The most commonly reported plant poisonings result from curious children eating fruits and plant fragments.

A review of the available literature has shown that problems exist for doctors who have to diagnose and treat cases of plant-induced poisoning in Canada. The initial problem is in determining whether the symptoms are indeed caused by plant toxins. The second is in acquiring a positive identification of the plant involved. In addition, well-documented literature is often not

available on previous cases of poisoning and treatment. Regional poison control centers, present in various areas of Canada, are the best sources of information.

Identification of plants suspected of poisonings can be obtained from federal and provincial agencies and universities. When obtaining plant material for identification purposes, try to collect fresh leaves, branches, flowers, and fruits. Dry the plant material in a press or put the plants in newspaper and press under books or bricks in a warm dry place. Provide information on the habitat of the plants, the location and the date of the collection, symptoms of poisoning, and any other data that seem relevant. However, the urgency of the situation may require you to submit fragmentary material for identification.

FORMAT

Families, genera within each family, and species under each genus are listed alphabetically by scientific names. Common English and French names are taken, whenever possible, from Common and botanical names of weeds in Canada/Noms populaires et scientifiques des plantes nuisibles du Canada (Alex et al. 1980). Additional French names of cultivated plants come from Noms des maladies des plantes du Canada/Names of plant diseases in Canada (Agriculture Quebec 1975). The general distributions are according to Boivin (1966, 1967), except where more recent information was available. If a location is identified in parentheses, the occurrence of the plant in that area has not been confirmed.

APPEAL TO READERS

This is the second of two publications providing a preliminary inventory of native, naturalized, and cultivated vascular plants causing poisoning or mechanical injury to livestock, other animals, and people in Canada. The first, Vascular plants poisonous to livestock in Canada, I. A preliminary inventory, has already been published (Mulligan and Munro 1983). The two publications are being distributed to various experts for their suggestions and corrections. Any additional information sent to the authors by readers will be utilized in a subsequent treatment, which will include illustrations and other identification aids.

AMARYLLIDACEAE (AMARYLLIS FAMILY)

AMARYLLIS (AMARYLLIS)
Amaryllis belladonna L. (amaryllis)
Amaryllis vittata Ait. (amaryllis)
Status: Ornamental herbs.
Toxicity: Sickness and death have been reported after ingestion of bulbs.
References: Morton (1962), Lewis and Elvin-Lewis (1977).
NARCISSUS (NARCISSUS)
Narcissus poeticus L. (narcissus, narcisse)
Narcissus pseudonarcissus L. (daffodil, jonquille)

Status: Household and outdoor ornamentals.
Toxicity: There have been cases of poisoning from ingestion of bulbs. Rare cases of dermatitis have occurred from contact with daffodils.
References: Wilson (1924), Muenscher (1951).

ANACARDIACEAE (CASHEW FAMILY)

RHUS (POISON-IVIES)
Rhus diversiloba Torr. & Gray (western poison-oak, sumac de l'Ouest)
Status and distribution: Native shrub; southwestern B.C.
Rhus radicans L. var. negundo (Greene) G.A. Mulligan (poison-ivy, herbe à la puce)
Status and distribution: Native shrub or climbing vine, southern Que., southern Ont.
var. radicans (eastern poison-ivy, herbe à la puce de l'Est)
Status and distribution: Native shrub or climbing vine; southern N.S., P.E.I., southern N.B.
var. rydbergii (Small ex Rydb.) Rehder (Rydberg's poison-ivy, herbe à la puce de Rydberg)
Status and distribution: Native shrub or trailing vine; N.S., N.B., Que., Ont., Man., Sask., Alta., B.C.
Rhus vernix L. (poison sumac, sumac à vernis)
Status and distribution: Small native tree; southern Que., southern Ont.
Toxicity: Sap from plants produces a severe dermatitis and even death.
References: McNair (1921), McNair (1923), Krause and Weidman (1925), Shelmire (1941), Harlow (1946), Symes and Dawson (1954), Gaillard (1956), Loev and Dawson (1956), Epstein (1958), Kligman (1958), Klingman (1963), Mulligan and Junkins (1977), Guin (1980), Koch and Leon (1981), Polk (1981), Schwartz and Downham (1981).

ANNONACEAE (CUSTARD-APPLE FAMILY)

Asimina triloba (L.) Dunal (pawpaw, asiminier trilobé)
Status and distribution: Native tree; southwestern Ont.
Toxicity: Some people suffer contact dermatitis and others have severe gastro-intestinal symptoms after ingestion of the fruits.
Reference: Barber (1905).

APOCYNACEAE (DOGBANE FAMILY)

Allamanda cathartica L. (golden-trumpet, trompette dorée)
Status: Indoor ornamental climbing shrub.
Toxicity: The fruit is considered poisonous, although supporting evidence is lacking.
Reference: Kingsbury (1964).
Nerium oleander L. (oleander, laurier rose)
Status: Indoor ornamental shrub.
Toxicity: Poisoning, death, and occasional cases of dermatitis have been reported.
References: Halsted (1899), Kingsbury (1964), Der Marderosian et al. (1976), Lewis and Elvin-Lewis (1977).

ARACEAE (ARUM FAMILY)

Arisaema triphyllum (L.) Torr. (Jack-in-the-pulpit, petit-prêcheur)
Status and distribution: Native herb; N.S., P.E.I., N.B., Que., Ont., southern Man.
Toxicity: Intense burning of the throat and mouth occurs if the rhizome is ingested.
References: Muenscher (1951), Kingsbury (1964).

DIEFFENBACHIA (DUMBCANES)
Dieffenbachia amoena Gentil (giant dumbcane, arum vénéneux)
Dieffenbachia bausei Regel (dumbcane, dieffenbachia)
Dieffenbachia picta Schott (spotted dumbcane, dieffenbachia tachetée)
Status: Indoor ornamentals.
Toxicity: Sickness and irritation of the mouth, which may interfere with swallowing or breathing, have occurred from ingestion of leaves and stems. The name dumbcane refers to paralysis of throat muscles caused by calcium oxalate crystals.
References: Barnes and Fox (1955), Pohl (1961), O'Leary and Hyattsville (1964), Walter and Khanna (1972), Der Marderosian et al. (1976), Lampe (1978), Arditti and Rodriguez (1982).
Monstera deliciosa Liebm. (Swiss-cheese plant, philodendron monstera)
Status: Indoor ornamental climber.
Toxicity: Severe irritation and allergy occur after ingestion of leaves or stems.
References: Webb (1984), Der Marderosian et al. (1976), Lewis and Elvin-Lewis (1977).

ARALIACEAE (ARALIA FAMILY)

Hedera helix L. (English ivy, lierre commun)
Status: Outdoor and indoor ornamental vine.
Toxicity: Cases of poisoning have been reported from ingesting leaves and berries. Some individuals develop severe dermatitis from touching the leaves.
References: Muenscher (1951), Forsyth (1968), Kingsbury (1964).

ARISTOLOCHIACEAE (BIRTHWORT FAMILY)

Asarum canadense L. (wild ginger, asaret du Canada)
Status and distribution: Native herb; N.B., Que., Ont., southern Man.
Toxicity: A few cases of dermatitis have been reported from contact with leaves.
Reference: Muenscher (1951).

BERBERIDACEAE (BARBERRY FAMILY)

Podophyllum peltatum L. (may-apple, podophylle pelté)
Status and distribution: Native herb; N.S., southwestern Que., southern Ont.

Toxicity: There is one recorded case of poisoning from ingestion of young shoots. Ingestion of the fruits occasionally causes catharsis.
References: Millspaugh (1887), Kaymakcalan (1964), Kingsbury (1964), Der Marderosian et al. (1976).

BORAGINACEAE (BORAGE FAMILY)

Echium vulgare L. (blueweed, vipérine)
Status and distribution: Naturalized herb; Nfld., N.S., N.B., Que., Ont., Man., Sask., Alta., B.C.
Toxicity: Contact with bristly hairs on the leaves and stems can produce severe skin inflammation and itching in some people.
Reference: Muenscher (1951).

CAMPANULACEAE (BELLFLOWER FAMILY)

LOBELIA (LOBELIAS)
Lobelia cardinalis L. (cardinalflower, lobélie du cardinal)
Status and distribution: Native herb; N.B., Que., Ont.
Lobelia inflata L. (Indian-tobacco, lobélie gonflée)
Status and distribution: Native herb; N.S., P.E.I., N.B., Que., Ont., southern B.C.
Lobelia siphilitica L. (blue cardinalflower, cardinale bleue)
Status and distribution: Native herb; Ont.
Toxicity: Sickness and death occurred in pioneer days after ingestion of these plants for medicinal purposes.
References: Millspaugh (1887).

CELASTRACEAE (STAFFTREE FAMILY)

EUONYMUS (SPINDLETREES)
Euonymus atropurpureus Jacq. (burningbush, fusain)
Euonymus europaeus L. (European spindletree, fusain d'Europe)
Status: Outdoor ornamental shrubs.
Toxicity: Poisoning has occurred in Europe after ingestion of berries.
Reference: Long (1917).

COMPOSITAE (COMPOSITE FAMILY)

Eupatorium rugosum Houtt. (white snakeroot, eupatoire rugueuse)
Status and distribution: Native herb; central N.S., N.B., Que., Ont.
Toxicity: Sickness and death have occurred after ingestion of milk from cows that have eaten white snakeroot. This problem has essentially disappeared since early this century.
References: Moseley (1906), Jordan and Harris (1909), Wolf et al. (1918), Couch (1927), Hansen (1928), Couch (1933), Moseley (1941).
Iva xanthifolia Nutt. (false ragweed, fausse herbe à poux)
Status and distribution: Native herb; N.S., P.E.I., N.B., Que., Ont., Man., Sask., Alta., B.C.

Toxicity: Some people develop dermatitis after coming in contact with the leaves.
Reference: Muenscher (1951).

EUPHORBIACEAE (SPURGE FAMILY)

Codiaeum variegatum (L.) Blume (croton, croton ou codier)
Status: Ornamental shrub or small tree.
Toxicity: Ingestion of bark and roots has caused dermatitis.
References: Morton (1962).
EUPHORBIA (SPURGES)
Euphorbia cyparissias L. (cypress spurge, euphorbe cyprès)
Status and distribution: Naturalized herb, sometimes grown as outdoor ornamental; Nfld., P.E.I., N.S., N.B., Que., Ont., Man., Alta., B.C.
Euphorbia esula L. (leafy spurge, euphorbe ésule)
Status and distribution: Naturalized herb; P.E.I., N.S., N.B., Que., Ont., Man., Sask., Alta., B.C.
Euphorbia helioscopia L. (sun spurge, euphorbe réveille-matin)
Status and distribution: Naturalized herb; N.S., P.E.I., N.B., Que., Ont., Sask., Alta., B.C.
Euphorbia lactea Haw. (candelabra-cactus)
Status: Ornamental shrub.
Euphorbia lathyris L. (caper spurge)
Status and distribution: Ornamental herb, also naturalized in B.C.
Euphorbia milii Ch. des Moulins (crown-of-thorns, couronne d'épines)
Status: Indoor ornamental.
Euphorbia peplus L. (petty spurge, euphorbe des jardins)
Status and distribution: Naturalized herb; Nfld., N.S., P.E.I., N.B., Que., Ont., Man., Sask., B.C.
Euphorbia tirucalli L. (penciltree)
Status: Ornamental tree.
Toxicity: The juice of these plants can cause dermatitis or even death if ingested.
References: Long (1917), Campbell et al. (1956), Kingsbury (1964), Frankton and Mulligan (1970), Worobec et al. (1981).
Ricinus communis L. (castor-bean)
Status: Ornamental tree.
Toxicity: Ingestion of only two to four seeds has caused death in adults.
Reference: Malizia et al. (1977), McIntosh (1980).

GINKGOACEAE (GINKGO FAMILY)

Ginkgo biloba L. (maidenhair tree, ginkgo)
Status: Ornamental tree.
Toxicity: Severe dermatitis has occurred from handling broken or crushed fruits.
Reference: Muenscher (1951).

HIPPOCASTANACEAE (HORSE-CHESTNUT FAMILY)

Aesculus hippocastanum L. (horse-chestnut, marronnier)
Status: Outdoor ornamental tree.
Toxicity: Children have been poisoned after ingestion of nuts in Europe.
Reference: Muenscher (1951).

LABIATAE (MINT FAMILY)

Leonurus cardiaca L. (motherwort, agripaume cardiaque)
Status and distribution: Naturalized herb; N.S., P.E.I., N.B., Que., Ont., Man., Sask., B.C.
Toxicity: Some individuals develop dermatitis after contact with the leaves.
Reference: Muenscher (1951).

LEGUMINOSAE (PEA FAMILY)

Abrus precatorius L. (precatory-pea)
Status: Imported seeds.
Toxicity: Seeds are used in necklaces and bracelets which occasionally are brought into Canada. One ingested seed is fatal to an adult.
References: Taylor (1962), Gunn (1969), Niyogi (1970), Davis (1978), McIntosh (1980), Hoy and Catling (1981).
Gymnocladus dioicus (L.) K. Koch (Kentucky coffeetree, chicot du Canada)
Status: Ornamental tree.
Toxicity: A woman was poisoned as the result of eating the fruit pulp.
Reference: Chesnut (1898).
Laburnum anagyroides Medic. (golden-chain, cytise)
Status: Ornamental shrub or small tree.
Toxicity: Golden-chain is considered the second most poisonous tree in Britain. Sickness and death have occurred from ingesting plant parts.
References: Long (1917), Forsyth (1968).
Robinia pseudoacacia L. (black locust, robinier faux-acacia)
Status and distribution: Naturalized shrub or tree, sometimes grown as an ornamental; N.S., (P.E.I.), Que., Ont., B.C.
Toxicity: Sickness has occurred in children after ingestion of the seeds and inner bark of black locust.
References: Emery (1887), Millspaugh (1887).
Thermopsis rhombifolia (Nutt.) Richards. (golden-bean)
Status and distribution: Native herb; Man., Sask., B.C.
Toxicity: Seeds have been implicated in poisoning of children in Western Canada.
Reference: Kingsbury (1964).
Wisteria spp. (wisteria, glycine)
Status: Woody ornamental twiners.
Toxicity: Poisoning has occurred in children after the ingestion of seeds or pods.
References: Anonymous (1961), Jacobziner and Raybin (1961b), Kingsbury (1964).

LILIACEAE (LILY FAMILY)

Convallaria majalis L. (lily-of-the-valley, muguet)
Status: Outdoor ornamental herb.
Toxicity: Sickness has occurred. A child was reported to have died from drinking the water in which lily-of-the-valley had been standing. All parts of the plant are considered toxic.
References: Kingsbury (1964), O'Leary and Hyattsville (1964).

Gloriosa superba L. (glory lily)
Status: Ornamental climber.
Toxicity: Sickness and death have occurred after ingestion of tubers.
Reference: Steyn (1934).

Veratrum viride Ait. (false hellebore, hellébore)
Status and distribution: Native herb; Y.T., Nfld., N.B., Que., Alta., B.C.
Toxicity: Sickness and death have occasionally occurred from ingestion of false hellebore.
References: Underhill (1959), Turner (1978)

ZIGADENUS (CAMAS)

Zigadenus elegans Pursh (white camas; zigadène élégant)
Status and distribution: Native herb; MacKenzie dist., Y.T., N.B., Que., Ont., Man., Sask., Alta., B.C.

Zigadenus gramineus Rydb. (death camas, zigadène vénéneux)
Status and distribution: Native herb; southern Sask., southern Alta., southern B.C.
Toxicity: Sickness and death have occurred after ingestion of bulbs.
References: Marsh et al. (1915), Cameron (1952), Spoerke and Spoerke (1979).

LORANTHACEAE (MISTLETOE FAMILY)

Phoradendron flavescens (Pursh.) Nutt. (American mistletoe)
Status: Sold around Christmas time.
Toxicity: Poisoning and death have occurred after ingestion of the berries.
References: Hymans (1898), Cann and Verhulst (1959).

MENISPERMACEAE (MOONSEED FAMILY)

Menispermum canadense L. (moonseed)
Status and distribution: Native herb; southwestern Que., Ont., southern Man.
Toxicity: Poisoning and death have been attributed to ingestion of the grapelike fruits.
References: Schaffner (1903), Gress (1935).

MORACEAE (MULBERRY FAMILY)

Maclura pomifera (Raf.) C.K. Schneid. (Osage-orange, bois d'arc)
Status: Small ornamental tree.
Toxicity: Some people develop dermatitis from contact with the milky sap.
Reference: Muenscher (1951).

OLEACEAE (OLIVE FAMILY)

Ligustrum vulgare L. (common privet, troène commun)
Status: Ornamental shrub.
Toxicity: Poisoning has occurred in children after ingestion of the berries.
Reference: Long (1934).

ORCHIDACEAE (ORCHID FAMILY)

CYPRIPEDIUM (LADY'S-SLIPPERS)
Cypripedium acaule Ait. (pink lady's-slipper, cypripède acaule)
Status and distribution: Native herb; (MacKenzie dist.), Nfld., N.S., N.B., Que., Ont., Man., Sask., Alta.
Cypripedium calceolus L. (yellow lady's-slipper, cypripède soulier)
Status and distribution: Native herb; MacKenzie dist., (Y.T.), Nfld., N.S., N.B., Que., Ont., Man., Sask., Alta., B.C.
Cypripedium reginae Walt. (showy lady's-slipper, cypripède royal)
Status and distribution: Native herb; Nfld., P.E.I., N.B., Que., Ont., Man.
Toxicity: Dermatitis develops in some people after they touch the glandular hairs on these orchids.
References: Halsted (1899), Muenscher (1951), Reddoch and Reddoch (1984).

PAPAVERACEAE (POPPY FAMILY)

Chelidonium majus L. (greater celandine, grande chélidoine)
Status and distribution: Naturalized herb; (Nfld., N.S.), P.E.I., N.B., Que., Ont.
Toxicity: Severe irritation, gastrointestinal problems, and death have occurred
Reference: Bandeline and Malesh (1956).
PAPAVER (POPPIES)
Papaver nudicaule L. (Iceland poppy, pavot d'Islande)
Papaver orientale L. (oriental poppy, pavot d'Orient)
Papaver rhoeas L. (corn poppy, pavot coquelicot)
Papaver somniferum L. (opium poppy, pavot somnifère)
Status: Ornamental herbs, occasionally escapes from cultivation.
Toxicity: Poppies contain many toxic substances in the foliage and fruiting pods.
Reference: Kingsbury (1964).

PHYTOLACCACEAE (POKEWEED FAMILY)

Phytolacca americana L. (pokeweed, phytolaque d'Amérique)
Status and distribution: Native herb; southwestern Que., southwestern Ont.
Toxicity: Poisoning and death have occurred.
References: French (1900), Sauer (1950).

POLYGONACEAE (BUCKWHEAT FAMILY)

Rheum rhaponticum L. (rhubarb, rhubarbe)
Status: Perennial crop plant.
Toxicity: Poisoning and death have been reported after ingestion of the leaf blades.
References: Anonymous (1917), Robb (1919), Culpepper and Moon (1933).

POLYPODIACEAE (FERN FAMILY)

Pteridium aquilinum (L.) Kuhn (bracken, grande fougère)
Status and distribution: Native herb; Nfld., N.S., P.E.I., N.B., Que. Ont., Man., Alta., B.C.
Toxicity: Although it is often considered edible, recent evidence indicates that bracken is carcinogenic.
References: Cody and Crompton (1975), Evans (1976), Pamucku et al. (1977).

RANUNCULACEAE (CROWFOOT FAMILY)

Caltha palustris L. (marsh-marigold, populage des marais)
Status and distribution: Native herb; Keewatin and MacKenzie dists., Nfld., N.S., P.E.I., N.B., Que., Ont., Man., Sask., Alta., B.C.
Toxicity: Sickness has occurred in Europe after ingestion of leaves.
Reference: Long (1917).
Ranunculus bulbosus L. (bulbous buttercup, renoncule bulbeuse)
Status and distribution: Naturalized herb; Nfld., N.S., (Que.), Ont., (B.C.).
Toxicity: Poisoning of children occurred in England after ingestion of the bulbous portion of plants.
Reference: Forsyth (1968).

RHAMNACEAE (BUCKTHORN FAMILY)

RHAMNUS (BUCKTHORNS)
Rhamnus cathartica L. (European buckthorn, nerprun commun)
Status and distribution: Small naturalized tree; N.S., P.E.I., (N.B.), Que., Ont., Man., Sask.
Rhamnus frangula L. (alder buckthorn, nerprun bourdaine)
Status and identification: Small naturalized shrub or tree; N.S., P.E.I., N.B., Que., Ont., Man.
Toxicity: Rare cases of poisoning have been reported in Europe. Buckthorns contain substances with laxative properties.
Reference: Kingsbury (1964).

ROSACEAE (ROSE FAMILY)

PRUNUS (CHERRIES AND PLUMS)
Prunus serotina Ehrh. (black cherry, cerisier tardif)
Status and distribution: Native tree, occasionally planted for wood; N.S., P.E.I., N.B., Que., Ont.

Toxicity: People have died after ingesting seeds in fruit, from chewing twigs, or from making tea from leaves.
References: Chesnut (1898), Hardin and Arena (1969), Mulligan and Munro (1981b).

Prunus virginiana L. (chokecherry, cerisier de Virginie)
Status and distribution: Native shrub; MacKenzie dist., Nfld., N.S., P.E.I., N.B., Que., Ont., Man., Sask., Alta., B.C.
Toxicity: Poisoning and death have occurred in children who ate large quantities of fruits without removing seeds.
References: Pardee (1847), Pijoan (1942), Mulligan and Munro (1981b).

RUTACEAE (RUE FAMILY)

Dictamnus albus L. (gasplant)
Status: Ornamental herb.
Toxicity: Photosensitization occasionally results after touching parts of gasplant, especially the seedpods. Reddish patches and blisters may occur for weeks on the skin.
References: Cummer and Dexter (1937), Henderson and DesGroseilliers (1984).

SAXIFRAGACEAE (SAXIFRAGE FAMILY)

Hydrangea macrophylla (Thunb.) Ser. (hydrangea, hortensia)
Status: Woody ornamental.
Toxicity: Ingestion of leaves and roots has caused illness.
References: O'Leary and Hyattsville (1964), Apted (1973), Der Marderosian et al. (1976).

SCROPHULARIACEAE (FIGWORT FAMILY)

Digitalis purpurea L. (foxglove, digitale pourpre)
Status and distribution: Naturalized herb, sometimes cultivated; Nfld., N.S., Ont., B.C.
Toxicity: Children have become sick after ingestion of flowers, seeds, or leaves.
Reference: Kingsbury (1964).

SIMAROUBACEAE (QUASSIA FAMILY)

Ailanthus altissima (Mill.) Swingle (tree-of-heaven, frêne puant)
Status: Ornamental tree.
Toxicity: Several cases of dermatitis have been reported in the United States from contact with the leaves.
Reference: Muenscher (1951).

SOLANACEAE (NIGHTSHADE FAMILY)

Cestrum nocturnum L. (night-blooming jessamine)
Status: Ornamental shrub.
Toxicity: Sickness has occurred after ingestion of this plant.

Reference: Morton (1958).
Datura stramonium L. (jimsonweed, stramoine commune)
Status and distribution: Naturalized herb; N.S., P.E.I., N.B., Que., Ont., Sask., Alta.
Toxicity: Sickness and death have occurred from ingestion of plant parts.
References: Beverly (1705), Garvin and Ruh (1923), Jennings (1935), Hughes and Clark (1939), Goldberg (1951), Stiles (1951), Mitchell and Mitchell (1955), Jacobziner and Raybin (1960), Jacobziner and Raybin (1961a), Mikolich (1975), Levy (1976), Moore (1976).
Nicotiana tabacum L. (tobacco, tabac)
Status: Cultivated herb.
Toxicity: Poisoning has occurred from ingestion of fresh leaves.
Reference: Kingsbury (1964).
Physalis peruviana L. (ground-cherry, coqueret)
Status: Ornamental herb.
Toxicity: Unopened fruits are considered poisonous.
Reference: Arnold (1944).
SOLANUM (NIGHTSHADES)
Solanum dulcamara L. (climbing nightshade, morelle douce-amère)
Status and distribution: Native woody vine; Nfld., N.S., P.E.I., Que., Ont., Man., Alta., B.C.
Toxicity: Berries of climbing nightshade may have caused poisoning of children in one case. This plant has since been considered poisonous and caution should be taken in cases of ingestion of berries.
Reference: Harshberger (1920).
Solanum tuberosum L. (potato, pomme de terre)
Status: Vegetable.
Toxicity: Sickness and death have occurred after ingestion of green-skinned potatoes, which can contain a toxic concentration of the chemical solanine.
Reference: Hansen (1925).

THYMELAEACEAE (MEZEREUM FAMILY)

DAPHNE (DAPHNE)
Daphne cneorum L. (garland daphne)
Daphne laureola L. (spurge-laurel)
Daphne mezereum L. (February daphne, daphné jolibois)
Status: Ornamental shrubs.
Toxicity: Sickness and death have occurred. Ingestion of only a few berries has resulted in poisoning of children.
References: Fyles (1920), Kingsbury (1961).
Dirca palustris L. (leatherwood, dirca des marais)
Status and distribution: Native shrub; N.B., Que., Ont.
Toxicity: Some people have developed severe irritation and blistering of skin as a result of handling the bark.
Reference: Muenscher (1951).

UMBELLIFERAE (PARSLEY FAMILY)

CICUTA (WATER-HEMLOCKS)
Cicuta douglasii (DC.) Coult. & Rose (western water-hemlock, cicutaire pourpre)
Status and distribution: Native herb; B.C.
Cicuta maculata L. (spotted water-hemlock, carotte à Moreau)
Status and distribution: Native herb; MacKenzie dist., Y.T., N.S., P.E.I., N.B., Que., Ont., Man., Sask., Alta., B.C.
Cicuta virosa L. (northern water-hemlock, cicutaire du Nord)
Status and distribution: Native herb; MacKenzie dist., Y.T., northern parts of Que., Ont., Man., Sask., Alta., B.C.
Toxicity: Sickness and death have occurred in children and adults as the result of ingestion of the rootstocks.
References: Pammel (1921), Haggerty and Conway (1936), Frankton (1955), Kingsbury (1964), Robson (1965), Campbell (1966), Starreveld and Hope (1975), Carlton et al. (1979), Mulligan and Munro (1981a).
Conium maculatum L. (poison-hemlock, ciguë maculée)
Status and distribution: Naturalized herb; N.S., Que., Ont., Sask., B.C.
Toxicity: Sickness and death have occurred after ingestion of leaves, roots, and seeds.
References: Pammel (1919), Muenscher (1951), Kingsbury (1964).
Heracleum mantegazzianum Somm. & Levier (giant hogweed, berce du Caucase)
Status and distribution: Naturalized herb; south-central Ont.
Toxicity: Humans can be photosensitized when handling of the leaves is followed by exposure to sunlight. This results in a rash and persistent blisters.
References: Morton (1975), Gunby (1980).
Pastinaca sativa L. (wild parsnip; panais sauvage)
Status and distribution: Naturalized herb; Y.T., Nfld., N.S., P.E.I., N.B., Que., Ont., Man., Sask., Alta., B.C.
Toxicity: Some humans acquire dermatitis after contact with the leaves, flowers, or fruits.
References: Muenscher (1951), Hardin and Arena (1969), Ivie et al. (1981).

URTICACEAE (NETTLE FAMILY)

Laportea canadensis (L.) Gaud. (Canada nettle, laportéa du Canada)
Status and distribution: Native herb; N.S., N.B., Que., Ont., Sask.
Symptoms: Hairs contain toxic juices which cause intense itching and pain.
Reference: McIntosh (1980).
Urtica dioica L. (American stinging nettle; ortie dioïque d'Amérique)
Status and distribution: Native herb; MacKenzie dist., Y.T., Lab., Nfld., N.S., P.E.I., N.B., Que., Ont., Man., Sask., Alta., B.C.
Toxicity: Contact with hairs, containing toxic juices, causes intense itching and pain.
References: Willis (1969), Bassett et al. (1977), McIntosh (1980).

VITACEAE (GRAPE FAMILY)

Parthenocissus quinquefolia (L.) Planch. (Virginia creeper, vigne vierge)
Status and distribution: Native climbing vine; (N.S.), N.B., P.E.I., Que., Ont., Man.
Toxicity: Ingestion of the berries has supposedly caused the death of children in a few cases, although evidence is circumstantial.
Reference: Kingsbury (1961).

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